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SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

FROM US REPS AT INTER-SUDANESE PEACE TALKS ON DARFUR

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KAWC](#) [KCRS](#) [SU](#) [NI](#) [DARFUR](#)

SUBJECT: ABUJA: ROUND SIX

11. (SBU) Summary: The Sixth Round of the Darfur talks at Abuja, held from September 15 - October 20, were hindered by controversy within the SLM/A, poor planning, and a perceived lack of serious approach by the GOS and the JEM/SLM. The African Union did not provide the stern leadership needed to keep the negotiations focused, especially given the enduring suspicion and lack of trust existing between the parties. Violence continued on the ground in Darfur, further eroding chances for success. Plans for the seventh round must focus on a disciplined, coordinated effort and must limit the size of delegations as well as restrict the increasing presence of non-participants or partners which interferes with the attention given to serious negotiation. As the talks move toward more substantive issues, the AU should make a concerted effort to use the time between sessions to help representatives of the parties to prepare for the next round. In the meanwhile, the United States should use its influence with the SLM/A to help ensure a solution to the movement's internal problems - which could well result in a more-than-two-way split or, worse, increased violence. End summary.

The Negotiations

12. (SBU) Neither the GOS nor the SLM/JEM showed enthusiasm to negotiate in good faith. Meetings were scheduled, but often suspended after a short while. Documents were presented (often late), but delays in translations also led to further delays. JEM dominated the newly-formed JEM/SLM group and clearly did most of the work. We expect that, as the subjects become more substantive, the AU will have to insist on a more disciplined approach by all. JEM has asked for AU support for a few of its members to remain for a time in Abuja to begin preparing papers for the next round. First, however, the parties must agree on the agendas for wealth-sharing and security commissions, an apparently daunting task that should, nonetheless, be accomplished before breaking October 20 for the end of Ramadan Eid. Round 6 results although meager will be real with agreement on some of the more general issues under power sharing and, optimistically, the approved agendas for the other two commissions. This would permit the parties to make focused preparation on the specific issue to be discussed during Round 7, if they were to use their time well during the month long break.

The SLM Issue

13. (SBU) The Sixth round began under the shadow of division and controversy within the SLM/A. Per agreement with SLM Chairman Abdul Wahid, the JEM and SLM joined forces to negotiate as one unit. Abdul Wahid, however, submitted an arbitrary list of 42 participants to the AU, thus provoking early SLM infighting. A group of disciplined commanders from the field, led by Bakheit Karimo and representing five tribes and one Arab tribe, traveled to Abuja in an attempt to convince the AU and International Community to accept a previous list of delegates signed by Minawi, Abdel Wahid, and Khamis. They were unsuccessful, and, increasingly frustrated by Chairman Wahid's inflexibility, returned to Darfur on October 16.

14. (SBU) The internal conflict within the SLM/A contributed to the negative climate. Other issues, such as the almost-instant condemnation of the SLA in the killings of 6 AU and contractor personnel, also became a focus of attention and dissatisfaction. The key issue is, however, the clash between SLM Chairman Abdel Wahid and Secretary General Mini Minawi. A long history of personal dislike has culminated in a dangerous rift in the movement which could lead to

multiple splinter groups and more violence. Attempts by the commanders, the AU, and the international partners to reason with Abdel Wahid fell on deaf ears. Eventually, many of his own supporters became frustrated by his arrogance and lack of leadership, and a quiet coalition of "neutral" members is emerging.

15. (SBU) The SLM conference planned for late October in Darfur is still on track. Various versions exist of who, what, and when, but we have talked with those on the planning commission and others acknowledge that an attempt was made to have all groups represented in the planning stage. Some, including Abdel Wahid and Khamis, refused to go to N'Djamena to participate. Minawi, on the other hand, had refused to hold the conference earlier in Kofra - as agreed to by the others. Chadian President Deby has told Abdel Wahid and some members of the International Community that he will try to convince the three leaders to go to Chad for a meeting, in the interest of SLM unity. This apparently would be a prelude to Deby's idea of a broader SLM Conference to be convened by him in Abeche or elsewhere in Chad. Many members in Abuja back this suggestion, but warn that Mini is not on Deby's list of favorites right now and may not attend.

Compromise?

16. (SBU) An air of frustration and almost fear hangs now over the SLM here. All acknowledge the need for a general conference soon. Most do not believe the conference planned to be held within the next few days is a Mini affair or a Zaghawa plot - especially since the co-chairmen are from the Massaleit and Bergit tribes. An emerging plan, which merits attention, is that this conference is held, Abdel Wahid attends, and the leadership remains intact for an interim period while the movement is organized. That would remove the threat of removal from Wahid especially, and allow breathing space in which to structure the SLM, hopefully keep it united, and select a competent team of negotiators acceptable to all factions.

Round Seven

17. (SBU) The talks are bogged down but not broken. If the next round is to be successful, however, the AU should limit numbers from all parties and consider the venue. A stream of researchers, authors, and representatives from NGO's and even the Holocaust Museum competed for time with the parties, detracting from the negotiations. Current AU planning is to limit the delegations to 30 members each, both for financial and efficiency reasons. In addition to expected intensive efforts to try to resolve the problem of a weak, divided SLM negotiating team, the AU, with help from international partners, also will make more attempts toward capacity building especially for the movements. The planned Norwegian/World Bank wealth sharing training workshop in Nairobi the week of November 8, focused on specific issues and actual, anticipated negotiators, seems a reasonable example of the sorts of efforts which might help. On a different tack, some expect that a GOS delegation truly representative of the GNU with prominent SPLM participation would make a difference. The movements even come close at times to insisting on it as a condition for negotiating with the GOS, but that is not an issue that can be resolved in Abuja or by the AU. Salim plans to reconvene Round 7 on November 20, working to and through Christmas if necessary. Everyone knows that it will take that long and longer to get the comprehensive agreement which is needed.

CAMPBELL